

9. Yellow Polar *Liriodendron tulipifera*

This tree is commonly called the “tulip poplar” or “tulip tree.” It gets these names from the shape of its leaves and flowers, which resemble tulips.



The yellow poplar is the largest broad leaf tree in North America and is prominent in the southeastern United States. Although called a poplar, it is not a member of the poplar family. It is actually in the magnolia family.

10. Flowering Dogwood *Cornus florida*

Several flowering dogwood trees can be found growing on the museum grounds. The white flowering dogwood is a wild species native to this area. The pink flowering dogwood is a cultivated species used for landscaping. Both species bloom in early spring.



The flowering dogwood is both the state flower and the state tree of Virginia. Early settlers used the twigs as toothbrushes. Dye was extracted from the bark. Native Americans believed bark from the dogwood, when crushed into a powder, would cure malaria.

11. Norway Spruce *Picea abies*

The Norway spruce is an evergreen introduced from Europe. It is a widely cultivated tree and is grown for ornamental landscaping, as it is here on the museum grounds.



The showy cones of the Norway spruce are the largest of all the spruces. A distinguishing feature of the Norway spruce is its drooping branches.

Conclusion

This concludes your walk on the museum grounds. We hope you found the exterior of the museum as fascinating as the interior.

Enjoy the remainder of your visit at the Southwest Virginia Museum Historical State Park. If you have any questions, a member of the park staff will be glad to assist you.



Please come again.

Notes

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Historical State Park*

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CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

A WALK ON THE GROUNDS



*Southwest Virginia Museum
Historical State Park*

Listed in the Virginia Landmarks Register
and the National Register of Historic Places

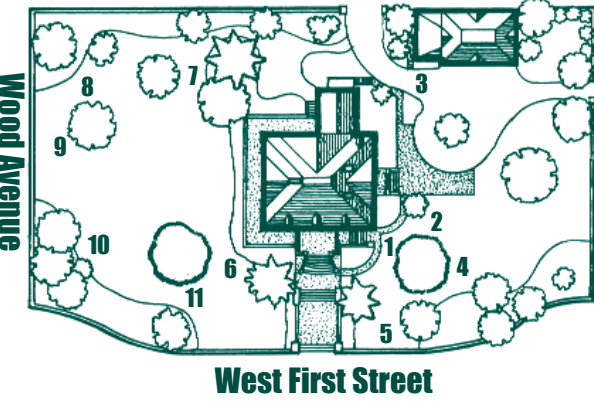
Big Stone Gap, Virginia

Introduction

The grounds of the museum offer a variety of sights as interesting and diverse as those found inside the museum. Both the natural and man-made worlds are represented. Artifacts as well as native and cultivated plants combine to beautify the grounds. As you stroll the grounds, you will find numbered posts that designate each stop mentioned in the brochure.

Please remember that the Department of Conservation and Recreation preserves this land for the benefit of present and future generations. All plants, animals and historical artifacts must be left undisturbed.

Enjoy your walk.



1. Exterior Framework

The Southwest Virginia Museum was originally the private residence of Rufus Ayers, an attorney general of Virginia from 1886-1890. Construction of the mansion was completed in 1895. Craftsmen labored on the exterior of the building for a wage of seventeen and a half cents an hour.

The exterior of the building is limestone and sandstone. The limestone is the lighter grayish stone, while the sandstone is much darker and brownish in color.



Several features stand out as you observe the exterior walls. The cornerstones are marked with a lattice pattern, unlike the rough stones used elsewhere. You may also see evidence of a two story, red oak porch that once covered the exterior. Flat rows of stones and iron supports are all that remains of this porch. Due to structural instability, the porch was removed many years ago.

The museum is honored to be listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

2. Stones from the Public School

These stones were part of the three-building complex that served as the public school for Big Stone Gap for many years. The dated blocks were part of the main building, and the words *Public School* were written over the main entrance.

The complex, which stood approximately one-half mile east of the museum on Wood Avenue, was torn down in the 1970s.



3. Carriage House

The Carriage House originally stored carriages and horses for the family and was built at or about the same time as the mansion. Later the Carriage House served as a residence for the museum curator.

In 1981, the structure was declared unstable and was no longer used as a residence. The building was slated to be torn down until funds were made available to restore it. The house is now used to store museum artifacts not on display. These artifacts, however, are used for special exhibits.



4. Iron Kettle

This cast iron pot was used for boiling seawater to obtain salt. The seawater was boiled off until only pure salt remained in the bottom of the pot.

Cast in Europe before 1776, the pot was brought from France to the United States by the Van de Vanter family. After several relocations, the pot became the property of a family in nearby Jonesville, Va., nearly a century ago.



5. Eastern Hemlock

Tsuga canadensis

The Eastern Hemlock is a member of the pine family. The hemlock's cone (less than an inch long) distinguishes it from other evergreens.

The bark of the hemlock was once a commercial source of tannin, used to produce leather. Tannin, a derivative of tannic acid, is used to darken materials.

Another use of the hemlock was the production of a tea from the leafy twigs. This was a readily available source of teas for pioneers of the area.

Today hemlocks are used for landscaping. It is both a native and a cultivated tree.



6. Rhododendron

Rhododendron catawbiense

The rhododendron is an evergreen that can be found growing in moist, acidic soil. Rhododendron is cultivated for landscaping purposes here on the museum grounds, as it is throughout the area.

Although commonly called *Laurel*, the rhododendron and the mountain laurel are actually different evergreens.



7. Cardinals

Several different species of birds can be seen frequenting this bird feeder on the museum grounds. Some of the more common birds seen include robins, blue jays, wrens and cardinals.

The cardinal is the state bird of Virginia. The male is brilliant red with a crest and a black face. The female is light brown and less showy in appearance. The song of the cardinal is a rich *purty-purty-purty-purty*. Cardinals got their name from the red robes worn by Roman Catholic Cardinals.

Watch for various birds throughout your walk. The museum grounds lie within a National Audubon Society Sanctuary, and the birds are protected.



8. American Holly

Ilex opaca

The American holly may be either male or female. The female produces berries in mid to late fall but there must be a male nearby to pollinate the flowers which produce these berries. This particular holly tree is male.

Most people associate holly with Christmas and decorations created using holly. While most decorations today are store-bought, turn of the century decorations were fashioned from naturally growing evergreens. Holly was one of the most popular of these natural decorations.

